37

a) The Acacia albida called kokuruni (Banankoroni).

Plate I

b) In the foreground, baskets of spiralled straw called yugu (Ségou market).

285
415

532

c) Drawing representing Faro (Sama).

326
791 Raffenel has given us an interesting portrait of one of these Bambara blacksmiths, whom he called father Niany, whose guest he was at Foutobi (Kaarta). He saw him act successively as fa, as priest of the manes and of the guardian spirits of the family, as doctor, and as exorcist. He was always alert, always excited and ever watching for the thousand manifestations of the invisible and hastening either to cooperate with them or to force them to do his will.

752 Here are some excerpts concerning the highly characteristic personage, father Niany:

"I saw a small child die of a snake-bite," reports Raffenel (2); "the poor creature was hideous and swollen up

2. In Nouveau voyage au pays des nègres [A New Journey to the Land of the Negroes], Vol. 1, p. 417.

like a balloon. Its mother had laid it [144] down in a field of millet which she was hoeing. A snake appeared (1) and bit the

[137]

1. "These snakes are 50 centimeters long and about 4 centimeters in diameter. Their back is gray, with very conspicuous black rings around the body. They have white bellies and a flat head rounded at the end. The part nearest the tail is covered on the upper surface by a series of vertical scales covering about a quarter of the length of the body. The tail is much smaller in diameter than the body. They like the outskirts of villages and are markedly fond of the roofs of houses." (Raffenel)

child. The mother misinterpreted its cries and offered her breast. Soon, however, the swelling became evident and the child had died within 24 hours." ....

132 of high water, part of the narrow plains bordering the river are inundated.

133 At the pass of Bamako the cliffs on the left bank are close to the river and hem in the city. The pass is marked by the appearance of rapids (Sotuba, Kénié), for the river meets for the first time the [20] sandstone it cuts through. The water is highest at Bamako around September 22 and begins to subside towards October 15. It is lowest around April and May.

137 The vegetation is quite unvaried. Species of great forest trees are found in the ravines of the mountains to the south; the small Sudanese forest covers the whole Niger region up to Bamako where the layer of laterite is thin. It is a forest of deciduous trees; the trees shed their leaves, and flower in the middle of the dry season while they are still bare; then the leaves appear before the return of rainy season which marks the awakening of the herbaceous plants. Let us note particularly the karite [shea] tree (Butyrospermum Parkii) which is the most widespread and characteristic of the Sudan; the nérê (Parkia biglobosa); the téli (Erythrophloeum guineense); the lingué (Afzelia africana); the caïlcedrat (Khaya senegalensis), as well as enormous gramineous plants of the Andropogon family which are more abundant in the humid depressions than on the plateaus.

[134] However, large areas covered with a layer of laterite are bare except for some scanty gramineous plants: this is the "bowal." These immense iron flats, barren of humanity, make excellent hunting

136 grounds. Buffaloes, panthers, Derby's elans, various kinds of monkeys, elephants, antelopes, lions, wart hogs, hippopotamuses, and crocodiles live there. The glossine (tsetse fly) abounds in the same region.

Between these immense, desolate bowals grow rice, millet,

241 and fonio (Digitaria exilis), the most wretched of the world's cereals and the most important for ritual purposes.

133 In the valleys, outside of the beds of laterite gravel, one finds the small forest or cultivation in newly cleared places and prairies are found in the sections that are annually inundated.

B. The Ségou Basin

This is a plain framed by the sandstone of the Manding and Dogon plateaus, by the Goundam range and the range south of the Dehar near Bassi Kounou.

133 or sandstone. Some of these bars result in handsome waterfalls. Between Bafoulabé and Kayes, the Senegal has two important waterfalls: those of Gouina and Félou. The Senegal flows between banks 300 to 800 meters apart, forming a channel from 10 to 12 meters deep; it is subject to periodic floods depending on the rainfall.

Two kilometers downstream from Kayes the river is joined at the right by the Kolombiné, which, north of Nioro, forms the Korkodio marsh, a veritable lake in the rainy season.

Near Nioro, the Sarakollé Massif joins the valley of the southern Hodh in hilly outcroppings; to the east of Nioro, one again finds fragments of sandstone and of white marble.

137 This region is characteristic of the Sahel savanna. The karite tree disappears in favor of shrubs: doum palms (Hyphaene thebaica), and cram-cram (Cenchrus catharticus). The climate being [23] [chart appears here in the original text] drier, the brush becomes thorny, but one still finds the baobab, numerous Combretaceae, and the precious Palmyra palm.

II. Climate and Meteorology

132 This region belongs to the zones of Sudanese and Sahelian climate. Its climate may be characterized thus:

A single rainy season, in summer;

Annual precipitation from 2,000 to 250 millimeters, decreasing from south to north;

Maximum precipitation in August.

A. Temperatures

The temperatures offer:

- a maximum corresponding to the passage of the sun to its zenith (March to May) with an absolute maximum of $>40^{\circ}$;
- a secondary maximum corresponding to the end of the rainy season;
- a minimum corresponding to the maximum remoteness of the sun (December-January) with an absolute minimum of $< 15^{\circ}$;
- a secondary minimum corresponding to the maximum precipitations.

755 The sorcerer consulted by a sick person explains to him the nature of his illness, tells him whether he is the victim of the hatred of a fetish in the service of some one malicious or envious, or of an enemy who is taking his own vengeance; or whether he is the victim of a gnâma, that fluid, that avenging force which every genie, every man, every animal, and both the living and dead possesses. In serious cases the patient is ordered to sacrifice many hens and quite often nanny goats and billy goats, but in cases that are mild or considered so, the remedies are more childish: should I mention a few?

To cure a headache, the sorcerer sticks the blade of his knife into the ground and places a cauri (1) at the base of the handle. After

[436] 1. A small white shell used as small change; at least 40 are needed to make a sou, or 0.05 francs.

having spit on the cauri and the knife handle, he lays his hands on the patient, who gazes at him; he recites a formula, and, if the sick person is not cured when the prayer is finished, he must at least feel an appreciable improvement, and he always says he does: "A kaf'sa san, I feel better now.

The sovereign cure for leucoma, they say, is a pinch of powdered hyena dung placed in the eye. Because it is rare and costly, the remedy cannot be bought by all, and powder of cauri shells is substituted for it. This powder is obtained by rubbing a cauri on the stone for grinding millet, a very long process. In order to apply oneself to the task as the old women do, more than training is needed; it calls for patience, or rather, a passivity which cannot be defined.

In cases of ophthalmia and other eye diseases, the temples, the eyebrows, and the tops of the cheeks are greased with kana mixed with a little karite (2) butter. The kana is always enclosed in a bull's

[137] 2. Karite, or butter tree, Bassia parkii, genus of the Sapotaceae.